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THE "MACHINE" ABOLISHED

AND

The People Restored to Power, by the Organization of all
the People on the Lines of Party Organization,

By **C. C. P. CLARK, M. D.**

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A Logical System of Municipal Elections, Effecting a True Organization and Empowerment of the Public Will.

("THE COMMONWEALTH RECONSTRUCTED.")

BY C. C. P. CLARK, M. D., OSWEGO, N. Y.

It is well recognized that rural townships everywhere in our country have always been and are today well governed under their system of the town meeting, which is simply an assembly of the people in personal conference. We can secure good government in cities only by building it on a like foundation. Therefore

1. Let the names of all the voters in a ward be deposited in a panel, publicly drawn therefrom one by one in the presence of the proper authorities, and distributed as they are drawn into equal lots or companies of not more than two hundred and fifty each.

2. Each of these lots shall constitute a primary electoral constituency, shall be assembled in strict privacy by personal notice to each of its members, and proceed to select from among the voters of the ward, but not of its own number, and by the vote of a majority of those present, a Representative Elector.

3. The electors so chosen in each ward being duly assembled in public session shall select and appoint the alderman and other officers of the ward.

4. The electors chosen in all the wards of the city shall, also in public session, elect the mayor and other officers of the city at large.

5. These proceedings are to be repeated every second year.

6. Any officer of a ward or of the city, including representative electors, may be summarily removed by the power to which he owes his office.

Thus, though it is impossible for all the voters in a city to take part in selecting their mayor, they may all have a part in choosing those who shall select him.

These are the essential principles of my system ; regulations of detail are omitted.

The advantages of this method over existing methods of choosing officials are innumerable. There is space to name only the following :

1. Every voter has an easy thing to do and an opportunity to do it, neither of which he has under the present method of the party caucus and voting at the polls.

2. There is no opportunity for fraud such as stuffing ballot boxes or packing caucuses.

3. No cut and dried programme can be carried out against the will of the majority.

4. Conferences of the people free to act like this always select good men and often the best to represent them.

5. To get good men as representatives in government is all that is necessary to get good government.

6. This system is non-partisan. Party has no business in city affairs.

7. It is most inexpensive, for its machinery is the simplest.

8. The body of representative electors will be a constant watch and guard over public affairs, as being responsible for their good administration.

9. It supplants the organization or "machine" of the politicians with an organization of the people.

The absolute necessity of such a change as this in our election system for populous constituencies must be evident to every mind if we consider the fact that only when assembled can men act in concert, and that whenever the number of persons in pursuit of a common object is too great for orderly conference and action in such general assembly the method of delegated power must necessarily be resorted to.

This however, unfortunately, our law makers have failed to discover, or at least to provide for, in the important case of municipal elections.

But politicians have discovered it, and make full use of it in the party caucus and convention; from which vantage ground they do all the *selecting* of our public servants, leaving to the people at the polls, only that *election*, or choice between two, which in our blindness we deem such a glorious privilege.

In fact, this system in its main elements is but a copy of that party organization with which we are all familiar, which has spontaneously sprung up all over the land because it is of nature, and which we have but the choice to use, or to be used by. And the question raised by my proposition is simply between the party caucus, such as we know it, where in effect, for one party or the other, all public power now takes its root, and the fair, quiet, non-partisan conference of the people which is here proposed in its place, and which ~~could not~~ fail to display the spirit, as it would have the form and the potency, of that old New England town-meeting which alone among our institutions still remains always virtuous and of good report.

This system was heartily approved of immediately on its presentation by the great bulk of the citizens of the city of Oswego, N. Y., only the caucus mana-

gers opposing it. But, three times asked for from the legislature at Albany by a very large majority of the voters and nearly all the taxpayers, it was as often beaten there by politicians of one party or the other, —once in the session of 1893 at the very door of the senate by Lieut. Gov. Sheehan, who frankly said in substance: "If the people get this what will become of us;" again at the next session by a shame-faced veto from Gov. Flower, in pursuit of renomination, and now the third time by its repudiation in a letter to me from Mr. Ainsworth, the leader of the republican majority in the assembly;—and in every case simply because it supplies that defect in existing laws and constitutions which now not only gives self-seeking politicians their opportunity, but makes them, in all populous constituencies, absolutely necessary to any kind of popular concert or co-operation in the election of public functionaries. Could it possibly have a better recommendation?

Evidently a wider effort and weightier influences are necessary to its success. But, undertaken in the same manner, and with the resolution and self-sacrifice which we constantly see displayed in reforms that at best but stick in the skin, there is not a city in the land where it will not be easier to win for it overwhelming popular support than it often is in a disputed precinct to send a man to congress. For "the common people hear it gladly."

OSWEGO, N. Y., [REDACTED]